

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Information for Medicare Savings Program Members

Medicare Savings Programs (MSP) – MSP are three programs, Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries (QMB), Specified Low Income Medicare Beneficiaries (SLMB), and Qualified Individuals (QI-1), for Medicare beneficiaries who are not eligible for full MassHealth benefits. For members of MSP, the state provides help paying for Medicare premiums, deductibles, and coinsurance. Income limits for the three programs range from 100% to 135% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and all three have asset limits of \$4,000 for an individual and \$6,000 for a couple.

General Facts:

- Medicare outpatient prescription drug coverage begins January 1, 2006.
- To receive Medicare drug coverage, a beneficiary must be enrolled in a Medicare prescription drug plan.
- Information on the plans is available through the *Medicare & You* handbook (sent to all Medicare beneficiaries), 1-800-MEDICARE, and www.medicare.gov.

Enrollment:

- Voluntary enrollment begins November 15, 2005. The initial enrollment period ends May 15, 2006. There may be a late enrollment penalty for those who do not enroll by May 15, 2006, and who do not currently have “creditable coverage” (drug coverage that is at least as good as Medicare drug coverage.)
- If an MSP member is not enrolled in a plan by May 15, 2006, Medicare will send the member a letter in May 2006 with the name of the plan that they will be **automatically** enrolled into if they do not select a plan on their own before June 1, 2006.
- Important factors in choosing a plan:
 - the list of drugs covered by the plan;
 - the plan’s pharmacy network; and
 - the costs of the plan (see below for information on help with plan costs).
- MSP members may change plans at any time, effective the first day of the next month. Call the new plan to enroll. Disenrollment from the old plan will be automatic.
- MSP members enrolled in Medicare Advantage, PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly), and SCO (Senior Care Options) plans, or who have employer or union drug coverage, should check with their current plans before enrolling in a prescription drug plan.

“Extra Help”/Low Income Subsidy (LIS):

- MSP members are automatically eligible for the Low Income Subsidy (LIS) (“extra help” with Medicare drug plan costs) and **do not** need to apply. Medicare sent all MSP members a letter in May 2005 confirming their eligibility for the extra help.
- MSP members will have no premiums (for “basic” plans up to \$30.27), no deductibles, and will have copayments based on income level.

Resources:

- Medicare: 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)
TTY: 1-877-486-2048 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)
www.medicare.gov
- SHINE: 1-800-243-4636, press 2
TTY: 1-800-872-1066 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)
www.medicareoutreach.org
- MassMedLine: 1-866-633-1617
TTY/TDD users should ask the operator to call the MassMedLine toll-free number
www.massmedline.com
- Medicare Advocacy Project (help with appeals): 1-800-323-3205
TDD: 1-617-371-1228 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)